

# Quarter Note



## Joyful Music Making

The Blair Woodwind Quintet  
prepare to premiere a work by  
Peter Schickele

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Cover photo of The Blair Woodwind Quintet by Daniel DuBois

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# From the *Dean*



Dean Mark Wait

It is a pleasure to bring you news from the Blair School of Music once again. This issue of The QUARTER NOTE goes to the very heart of what we are about as musicians. When we think about schools of music, we usually think of places where performing musicians and scholars are trained, both as performing artists and as teachers, and where concerts are given. That much is true, and it is important.

There is another element to music, however—its actual creation. Of course, the Blair School, like most schools of music, has several wonderful composers on its faculty, and we take great pride in their work. Three years ago, however, we decided to commission works for three of our finest ensembles—the Blair String Quartet, the Blair Woodwind Quintet, and the Blakemore Trio—from nation-

ally and internationally renowned composers. With funding from the James S. Turner Family Foundation, these commissions are becoming a reality. In addition, the Dean's Office is funding commissions of solo works for several of our individual faculty members at Blair.

These commissions are vitally important for several reasons. First, of course, they culminate in the creation of musical works that expand and enrich the repertoire. Too often, we concentrate on music of the past while ignoring the fact that engaging new works is part of our work as artists and musicians. Secondly, these new works will bring attention to the Blair School and its excellent performing faculty, who will become the proponents of these works. All of these works will be performed not only at Vanderbilt University, but at important musical centers elsewhere. Finally, by making possible the actual creation and performance of these new works, we are reminded of the importance of music as a means of expression, as an art form in itself. And that, ultimately, is the very reason we exist as artists and as a school of music.

Mark Wait

Dean

# A Challenging Blend

Composer Peter Schickele creates a new work for the Blair Woodwind Quintet

By Angela Fox

The ambitious goal of the Blair Commissioning Project is to pair each of Blair's three signature faculty ensembles with acclaimed composers from around the world to create new music for audiences everywhere to enjoy. *A Year in the Catskills* by Peter Schickele is one of these most eagerly anticipated new works. It has its world debut this spring with the Blair Woodwind Quintet.

"When we received word of the James Stephen Turner Family Foundation funding of the Blair Commissioning Project in 2006, I let the ensembles pick the composer they wanted," Dean Mark Wait says. The Blakemore Trio selected composer Susan Botti, whose new work is set for its world premiere with the trio in New York City in spring 2010, while Blair String Quartet chose Gyorgy Kurtag.

After reviewing the works of dozens of composers, the Blair Woodwind Quintet picked Schickele, perhaps best known

Kirchner, flute; Jared Hauser, oboe; Cassandra Lee, clarinet; Cynthia Estill, bassoon; and Leslie Norton, horn. "We felt we needed a composer who understands these instruments—and Schickele is a bassoonist as well as an incredible composer," Kirchner says. "We also love this man's humor, because, even though we take music seriously, we find much joy in our work, too."

Schickele has been finding joy in music since childhood. Born into a musical family in Iowa, Schickele grew up in Washington, D.C., and Fargo, N.D., where he studied composition with Sigvald Thompson. "We used to have lots of chamber music in the home," Schickele recalls. "My brother played the viola and was always getting people together to play chamber music, so I was around string quartet music a lot."



Schickele

at the Juilliard School of Music, where he returned to teach in 1961.

Schickele gave up teaching four years later to pursue a career as a freelance composer/performer and gained international acclaim when he "discovered" the works—and indeed the very existence—of P.D.Q. Bach, the great

composer's long-lost (yes, some would say fictional) offspring. While he still has a warm and fruitful working relationship with this branch of the Bach dynasty, Schickele has earned as much if not more acclaim in recent years composing for symphony orchestras, choral groups and chamber ensembles. A short sample of recent Schickele premieres includes: Concerto for Viola and Orchestra, with Danielle Farina and the Pasadena Symphony under Jorge Mester; Symphony No. 2 *The Sweet Sea-*

"He is a truly a multifaceted composer. He has an incredible catalog of compositions and has written for every medium. So one thing I know about his Blair commission is that it will be very well-crafted." —Dean Mark Wait

for his satirical/musical alter-ego P.D.Q. Bach, but also an outstanding musician and composer in his own right. "The woodwind quintet is a strange animal," says Jane Kirchner, quintet charter member since 1971. "It's unlike a string or brass quintet, in which the instruments' sounds are produced in basically the same way and the timbre of the group is homogeneous." The Blair ensemble consists of

Schickele himself gravitated to the woodwinds as a young boy—and laid claim to being the only bassoonist in Fargo at the time. By the time he graduated from Swarthmore in 1957, he had already composed and conducted orchestral works, chamber music and a number of songs. He went on to study composition with Roy Harris and Darius Milhaud, and with Vincent Persichetti and William Bergsma

*son*, premiered by the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra under Stefan Sanderling; *New Goldberg Variations* for cello and piano, performed by Yo-Yo Ma and Emanuel Ax; Symphony No. 1 *Songlines*, premiered by the National Symphony under Leonard Slatkin and performed by such orchestras as the New York Philharmonic and the Cleveland Orchestra; and *Blue Set No. 1*, a jazz string quartet

commissioned by the Greene Quartet and recorded on the Virgin label.

Schickele has also created music for feature films, documentaries, television commercials and several *Sesame Street* episodes. He was one of the composer/lyricists for *Oh! Calcutta!*, and his weekly syndicated radio program, *Schickele Mix*, has been heard nationwide over Public Radio International since 1992. Then there are his orchestral programs *P.D.Q. Bach: The Vegas Years* and *P.D.Q. Bach Strikes Back*, as well as his chamber program, *P.D.Q. Bach and Peter Schickele: The*

but with strings, the instruments are similar and inherently have a strong blend," he notes. "With woodwinds, each instrument is so different. The flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon, though all winds, are all different sounds, and the French horn, well, that isn't even a woodwind and so it can really stick out. The blending is tricky—so while I want to take advantage of the variety, I also want to explore the blending."

Schickele's new work explores variety and blending in five movements. The first movement, called "Fantasy," showcases

line that I had never used and had never even decided which instruments they were suited for," Schickele says. "When I began working on this commission, I realized these sketches were perfect for a woodwind quintet."

The fourth movement features a prominent oboe solo and a clarinet solo—and invites audience reflection. "It's slow and still," Schickele says. "I don't like to use words like 'sad' because it's like telling the audience what to feel." The fifth movement, while not overtly humorous, certainly sounds like it may leave audiences smiling. "The final movement is a bebop jazz kind of thing," says Schickele.

If composing for woodwinds poses a challenge, tackling a new work also tests the musicians debuting the work. "You practice even harder and study the score more closely because you don't have previous recordings to listen to," Kirchner says. "You have to determine the character of the music, have colleagues coach and counsel you, and tape yourselves playing the piece to listen, critique and learn more."

Despite the extra attention a new work requires, it is perhaps the most exciting kind of music to perform. "New works offer a great opportunity to grow and learn," Kirchner says. "And we especially need new music because the woodwind quintet doesn't have as extensive a repertoire as the strings or brass, whose music goes back centuries. A lot of what woodwind quintets play is 20th century music. We hope Schickele's work will be a new classic of this century."

"We need original music," agrees Jared Hauser, the newest member of the Blair Woodwind Quintet. "This is my first season with the quintet and one of the things that really excited me about joining the ensemble was the commissioning project. This whole series of commissioned pieces is really rare and is a big feather in the cap of the school."

"Not many schools of music do this," Wait concurs. "We teach our students to play the music of the past, but it is equally important to support and nurture and present the music of the future."

the virtuosity of the five instruments and is "hefty and involved," according to the composer. The second movement, called "Imitations," is a series of canons where the instruments mimic each other for what Schickele calls a "hypnotic, trance like effect."

The third movement is inspired by the bass line from Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, a rich musical vein Schickele has mined in the past, resulting in several other compositions. "I still had sketches on the bass



The Blair Woodwind Quintet is, from left, Leslie Norton, horn; Cynthia Estill, bassoon; Cassandra Lee, clarinet; Jane Kirchner, flute; and Jared Hauser, oboe.

*Jekyll and Hyde Tour*, that continue to explore his musical satirist persona.

"He is truly a multifaceted composer," Wait says. "He has an incredible catalog of compositions and has written for every medium. So one thing I know about his Blair commission is that it will be very well-crafted."

Part of the fun of this particular commission for Schickele is the challenge presented by writing for woodwinds. "I've written several pieces for string quartets,

## Cornelia Heard named holder of Valere Blair Potter Chair

Cornelia Heard, professor of music and chair of the strings department of the Blair School of Music, has been named the holder of the newly created Valere Blair Potter Chair.

The chair is endowed through a gift to the university by the grandchildren of Valere Blair Potter.

"We are very excited to receive this endowed chair, and most proud of this recognition by the Potter family of Connie's accomplishments as a performer and teaching artist," said Mark Wait, Blair School dean. "This rare and valued endowment is an example of the generosity of the descendants of Valere Blair Potter to Vanderbilt University and the Blair School in particular through the generations, and it is most fitting that Connie Heard be named the recipient of this honor."

In addition to being a much sought-after teacher in both the university and precollege schools at Blair since 1982, Heard is a violinist for the Blair String Quartet, the school's most celebrated performing ensemble. She has performed as soloist with the North Carolina Symphony, Nashville Symphony, Vanderbilt Orchestra, Municipal Chamber Orchestra in New York, and Aspen Brandenburg Ensemble. Her students have won and been prize winners in such competitions as Music Teachers National Association National Competition, Corpus Christi International Competition, Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition, Montgomery and LaGrange Symphony Concerto Competitions, Curb Records/Nashville Symphony Competition, as well as local and summer festival concerto competitions. She has served as a member of the per-



Cornelia Heard

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—Dean Mark Wait

formance faculty at the Sewanee Festival, 1985-99; Killington Music Festival 2002-04; and the Aspen Music Festival 2005-07.

Valere Blair Potter, a beloved Nashville community philanthropist and volunteer, along with her daughter, Anne, and son-in-law, David K. Wilson, founded the Peabody Preparatory School of

Musical Arts in 1964, under the auspices of the Potter Foundation. This well-known music academy later became the Blair School of Music, and joined Vanderbilt University in 1981. Valere Potter's grandchildren, members of the Potter and Wilson families of Nashville and California, are the donors of the chair at the Blair School.

# Gracious Guests

*The Blair School hosts distinguished, internationally recognized artists this year*

By Tim Ghianni

The Blair School of Music this year has shown as much vigor as an 88-year-old man.

And that's a good thing, because in this case, the octogenarian-plus is string master Robert Mann, who founded the Juilliard String Quartet in 1946 and remained first violinist until "retiring" in 1997.

"Bobby is a joy," says Dean Mark Wait, marveling at the October visit during which Mann played second viola with

the Blair String Quartet and gave master classes.

Mann's visit set a vigorous tone for the school. "It's a good year for us," Wait says. This "good year" also included the visit to Blair by world-class musicians who recreated iconic composer Elliott Carter's textured, challenging work as part of a worldwide observance of his 100th birthday. And it includes Renée Fleming—"the best soprano in the world," according to

Wait—who is setting aside her usual requirement for 1,000-plus-seating to perform in the 618-seat Ingram Hall. Additionally, the Blair String Quartet presented the local premiere of *Triptych*, esteemed New York composer Robert Sirota's rumination on 9/11. The composer, who is president of the Manhattan School of Music, attended the performance, which he regaled as "transcendent" in a congratulatory note to the quartet.



STEVE GREEN

Those may seem highlights enough for one year, but it shouldn't be overlooked that the generosity of benefactors allowed Blair to push forward by commissioning works by great composers for performance by the faculty of musical virtuosos.

Deserved pride lights Wait's face as he reviews these accomplishments. "The Blair School is relatively young. We've only had a collegiate program since 1986. And the trajectory is definitely upward," he says. "Just the fact that we can bring in great artists for the students and the faculty is a great pleasure," he says.

Equally excited by the year—most especially by the Mann visit—are members of the Blair String Quartet.

First violinist Chris Teal, a 35-year member of the BSQ, recalls it as "unforgettable." Mann "gave a wonderful master class," he says. "And even though he's known as a great, great violinist, he also played viola." In fact, Mann, the Juilliard String Quartet founder—whose biography includes a 1952 visit to Albert Einstein's house during which the scientist joined in on violin—played the second viola part in the Blair group's performance of Mozart's Quintet in C-Major for String Quartet and Viola.

Mann "has been an incredible force in chamber music in America," says Teal. "He's a living legend . . . His commitment and passion and his vision of the vitality of chamber music has inspired a lot of players."

One who speaks to that inspiration is BSQ violist John Kochanowski, who has known Mann for 37 years. "I was a student at Juilliard, and he was my teacher," he says. "I've been at Vanderbilt 21 years. Before that I was the violist and founding member of the Concord String Quartet, which Bobby Mann put together. [He] was my mentor."

Kochanowski says the visit was "one of those great, once-in-a-lifetime things. To have him sit next to me and make music is the great thrill of my life."

A violin master class with Grammy-nominated guest virtuoso Andres Cardenes was held this fall in Blair's Turner Hall. Here Cardenes works with Blair freshman Caroline Hart.

The performance aside, Mann's visit also was reaffirming to these musicians and students.

"What was so profoundly moving to me: That (master) class he gave so beautifully explained why music is important to everyone," Kochanowski says. "He showed our students a level of intensity that is hopefully going to run through their lives."

Voice students will seek similar inspiration in the April appearance by Metropolitan Opera star Fleming, who only agreed to perform in Ingram Hall after hearing raves by fellow soprano Dawn Upshaw, who has sung at Blair twice. The sopranos share the same agent, and word of the gem that is Ingram convinced Flem-

ing to appear at Blair, according to Wait. Both sopranos' visits were made possible through a fund endowed by the late Mary Ragland, an accomplished soprano who settled in Nashville and became a patron of the arts.

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Robert Mann (center), founder of the Juilliard String Quartet, presented a master class at Blair during the fall semester. He and Blair's John Kochanowski (right) work with Ben Hart.

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The November "Music for 100 Years—The Elliott Carter Centenary Concert" was another peak. Carter's 100th birthday was celebrated throughout the classical world, as ensembles explored the works of the composer who consistently challenges textural, tonal boundaries.

"There might be some long, lyrical line contrasted with a skitting, jittery

organization," Wait says, emphasizing how special the opportunities and circumstances were that brought these acclaimed artists to perform at the Blair School. "This year we were especially fortunate to get some of the great artists in the musical world."

"Every year the Blair School has very good artists come visit: This just happened to be a great year."

*Tim Ghianni, a veteran journalist who lives in Nashville, is serving this year as Journalist-in-Residence for Vanderbilt Student Communications.*

JONAH RUSSELL

# Listening to History

Blair professors Joy Calico and Jim Lovensheimer reconsider the Cold War era by examining two strikingly different works of music

By Jonathan Marx

With politics at the forefront of the news cycle, particularly given the past election year, it's easy to assess the impact of today's constant barrage of instantaneous news on the artists of our time. Tune in any radio—or perhaps more accurately, access YouTube—and you can hear the latest lullaby, parody or pop tune geared to a particular political viewpoint.

This is no less true for composers working in classical music or musical theatre, nor is it limited to those working in the present day. Cultural context, including the role of politics, has always shaped how music is composed and performed, and Blair School of Music professors Joy Calico and Jim Lovensheimer feel that as musicologists they are charged with helping students to understand music within the cultural context of its creation. Both will tell you, however, that this context is perpetually shifting, subject to the vagaries of history and society. Through their own scholarly pursuits, Calico and Lovensheimer come a little closer to grasping the profound complexities of music as it is experienced in the real world.

"I try to discourage my students from thinking of music only as entertainment," Calico says. "Composers don't live in a vacuum. We have this idea that they operate in a parallel universe where outside forces don't affect them, but politics—on any number of fronts, and interpreted any number of ways—affects what they do."

This idea is at the core of Calico's latest research-in-progress, *Musical Remigration: Schoenberg's "A Survivor from*

*Warsaw" in Postwar Europe*, a study of the celebrated modernist's 1947 choral work, which gives powerful expression to the experiences of Polish Jews during the Holocaust. The composer died in 1951, leaving behind *A Survivor in Warsaw* as



Blair musicologists Joy Calico and Jim Lovensheimer

a kind of thorny posthumous legacy.

"The piece is a lens through which to view what was happening in postwar Europe," Calico explains, "so I'm looking at how the piece was received in seven different countries on both sides of the East/West divide. It managed to hit every exposed nerve of the European psyche at the time. It was written by a Jew; it's about the Holocaust; it makes the Germans look like fiends and the Jews look

heroic; it's a 12-tone composition; and though Schoenberg (who moved to the United States in 1934) never returned to his home in Austria, this piece serves as a kind of symbolic remigration.

"The buttons it pushes are the same everywhere, but the specific contexts that emerge are interesting."

As a case in point, Calico cites the piece's mixed reception in West Germany during the 1950s. "We have this image of West Germany in the 1950s as a nirvana for modern music, but that's not entirely true. My research shows that there was an anti-Semitic sentiment running through the country at the time, and that influenced the reception of *Survivor*. The American version of West German history isn't an accident—in this case, history was quite literally written by the victors."

Calico will continue to work on the book during the next academic year, thanks to having received a highly competitive ACLS Frederick Burkhardt Fellowship for Recently Tenured Scholars, which will allow her to spend 2009-10 as a fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard. Her archival research thus far in Warsaw, Oslo and Paris has been funded by a Vanderbilt University Research Scholars Grant and a Howard Fellowship from the George A. and Eliza Gardner Howard Foundation; the latter will fund Calico's additional archive work in Prague, Vienna and Leipzig this summer.

"There's a huge body of literature on Holocaust studies that I'm just now getting into," Calico says, "and I have no doubt that this scholarship will affect the way I'm handling this project."

Lovensheimer has encountered his own share of revelations about the postwar era in his latest research project, *South Pacific: Paradise Rewritten*, due to be published by Oxford University Press later this year. Though Rodgers and Hammerstein's hugely popular musical would seem to have little in common with Schoenberg's jarring piece, the two works premiered within a year of each other. And, like *A Survivor in Warsaw*, *South Pacific* has a lot to tell us about the mid-20th-century mindset.

"When I was doing some research at the Library of Congress in the Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, I discovered that the show started out much more political than it ended up being," Lovensheimer says. "At the same time, it does have a message of racial tolerance. So the playwrights had to find this fine line between edifying and entertaining their audiences. My work at large is about looking at issues of gender, race, colonialism and the new corporate system, and demonstrating how *South Pacific* deals with those issues."

In the field of musicology, American musical theater remains a relatively unexplored topic of discussion. This is, Lovensheimer says, because it's a popular genre. "Classical music critics don't take it seriously because they think it's middlebrow, and theater people don't take it seriously because they think it's not legitimate theater," he says. "This is starting to change, though, and I'm hoping that this book will be a part of creating that change. Within this genre, there are some powerful cultural texts that tell us about who we are: *Showboat* addresses the issue of race, for instance, and *Oklahoma* is all about being an American in a time of war."

Lovensheimer routinely brings his irrepressible enthusiasm for research into the classroom, where he urges students to open their minds to new ways of thinking. It's for this reason, among others, that he was named not only the 2008 winner of the Ellen Gregg Ingalls Award for Excellence in Classroom Teaching at Vanderbilt, but also the recipient of the Chancellor's Cup, given annually to a faculty member whose dedication to teach-

ing spills out of the classroom and into student life (see below). For Lovensheimer, it's all a part of getting people to understand the fundamental vitality of the culture that surrounds us every day.

"My goal is to make people aware of the vast body of music that's out there to be experienced," he says. "One of the few soapboxes I get on is to instill in my

students the idea that American music is not inferior to European music. It's an intersection of cultures and people and ideas and traditions that most of us don't think go together. And yet they're always bumping together and creating something new, and that's what makes American music so exciting."

## Chancellor's Cup awarded to Blair's Lovensheimer



Chancellor Nicholas S. Zeppos presents professor of musicology Jim Lovensheimer (center) with the Chancellor's Cup as Thomas Connor (left) of the Alumni Association looks on.

Jim Lovensheimer, assistant professor of musicology, was surprised to see Chancellor Nicholas S. Zeppos striding into his American Popular Music class. With a video of James Brown up on the screen behind him in the Sarratt Cinema, Lovensheimer was speechless when Zeppos announced he was here to "give you the Chancellor's Cup," and the class broke into applause.

The Chancellor's Cup is given annually for "the greatest contribution outside the classroom to undergraduate student-faculty relationships in the recent past." The faculty member's contribution "shall be one of educational importance, relevant to the central purpose of the University."

After receiving his Ph.D. from the Ohio State University, Lovensheimer joined the Blair School of Music faculty in 2002.

"Jim is very generous with students both individually and collectively, both with classes at Blair and classes outside Blair," Blair Dean Mark Wait said. "He offers a scintillating class for non-majors and yet creates very sophisticated and elegant classes for music majors."

"He's terrific," Wait says. "Blair and Vanderbilt are lucky to have him."

"[The chancellor] stood there for a long time saying wonderful things, none of which I remember because I was stunned," Lovensheimer says. "I still don't think of what I do for students as being outside the parameters of my work. It is a vital part of that work. If the students knew how much I learn from them each semester, and how much I treasure that learning, it might reinvent the student-professor relationship."

—Missy Pankake



The Nashville Boychoir at Blair performed with the Cathedral Choir of Ely Cathedral (in red) at Nashville's St. George Episcopal Church last fall.

# A Boy(choir)'s Life

*The Nashville Boychoir at Blair partners with a British choir, while three of its own celebrate accomplishments*

Connecting with other boychoirs worldwide has been an ongoing project for the Nashville Boychoir at Blair since its inception. As they did last year, the Nashville Boychoir under the direction of Hazel Somerville joined with the Cathedral Choir of Ely Cathedral, U.K., last fall for a workshop and concert.

Under the direction of Paul Trepte, organist and director of music at Ely Cathedral, the combined boychoirs sang four songs by English composer Richard Rodney Bennett. An hour-and-a-half long workshop was preceded by a vigorous dodge-ball game between the two choirs (a great hit with the boys). Also that

evening, Peter North, music director of the King's School, Ely, conducted a workshop for the Young Men's Chorus, leading to their singing alongside the professional lay clerks (men singers) of the Ely Cathedral Choir.

Both groups combined in concert at Nashville's St. George Episcopal Church



The British and Nashville choirs participated in a joint workshop prior to their performance at St. George's.

the next afternoon. Both Trepte and the head chorister of the choir praised the Nashville group for their professionalism and sound.

**Ty Jackson**, a member of the Nashville Boychoir at Blair, is the treble soloist in the Nashville Symphony Orchestra and Chorus recording of John Corigliano's *A Dylan Thomas Trilogy*, released in the fall on the Naxos label. The work was conducted by Leonard Slatkin and recorded in December 2007 at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center. Joining Jackson as soloists for the piece were Sir Thomas Allen and John Tessier.

Jackson's solo on "Fern Hill" was originally scored for mezzo-soprano, chorus

and orchestra, but was changed in its final form for boy-soprano. In its review of the piece on ClassicalSource.com, Jackson was praised for his "marvelous voice, and it's clear he understands the text, too."

Boychoir member **Jake Moor** shared the treble solo with Jackson during performances of the Corigliano piece with the Nashville Symphony Orchestra and Chorus during its 2007-08 season, singing the part at the Saturday performance. Moor has sung numerous solos with various groups, including Nashville Opera's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* in December.

**Parker Ramsay**, former member of the Nashville Boychoir at Blair, has accepted the prestigious position of Organ Scholar at King's College, Cambridge University, England. He will be the first American to hold this position and will begin his studies there in the fall of 2010. The Organ Scholarship at King's College is one of the premier positions in the world for training young organists. Previous holders include Simon Preston, later organist of Westminster Abbey, and Sir Andrew Davis, later conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra.



Ty Jackson (right) with John Corigliano



Parker Ramsay

During his three-year course of study, Ramsay will accompany the world-famous King's College Choir for services, concerts, tours, recordings and broadcasts, including the annual worldwide live BBC radio broadcast of the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols on Christmas Eve.

Ramsay has distinguished himself as a performer on both organ and harp and as a composer, earning diplomas in both harp and organ performance from the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) in 2006. He was twice awarded first prize in the Music Teachers National Association National Composition Competition, was a national prize winner in the American Harp Society National Competition, and was awarded the ABRSM Hedy King Robinson Award for music theory in 2008.

In addition to being a member of the Nashville Boychoir at Blair, he served as principal harpist of the Curb Youth Symphony, under the direction of Carol Nies. He played continuo for Belle Meade Baroque under the direction of Murray Somerville, and studied harp with Carol McClure, artistic director of The Harp School Inc. He studied organ with Wilma Jensen, music director, emerita, of St. George's Episcopal Church, Nashville, and piano with Robert Marler of Belmont University. He was supervised in his theory and composition work by Wes Ramsay.

He is currently a student at the King's School, Ely, U.K., where he serves as Sixth Form Organ Scholar for Ely Cathedral, studying with organist Paul Trepte and regularly performing and conducting in the weekly schedule of services in the cathedral. During his time in Ely, Ramsay has continued to distinguish himself, winning the Composer of the Year award offered by the Cambridge Young Musicians Trust. A member of the Nashville Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, the American Choral Directors Association and the American Harp Society, Ramsay participated in the Cathedral Choir of Ely Cathedral tour, including its stop in Nashville, which reunited him briefly with the Nashville Boychoir at Blair.

# DON'T MISS THESE TWO EXCITING SPRING EVENTS!



## BLAIR COMMISSIONS SERIES PREMIERE

Composer **PETER SCHICKELE**

Schickele Mix and Match: Quintet Classics, old and new (or then and now)

## THE BLAIR WOODWIND QUINTET

**Monday, March 16, 8 p.m., Ingram Hall**

*Sponsored in part by the James Stephen Turner Family Foundation*

The Blair Woodwind Quintet proudly presents the world premiere of its commission by Peter Schickele. Alongside this eagerly anticipated event, the ensemble offers two earlier classics from the repertoire by Anton Reicha, the first-ever composer for quintet, and Carl Nielsen, among the 20th century's best wind composers. Come celebrate one brand-new piece and two grand old ones, along with oboist Jared Hauser's first performance as a member of the Quintet.

*This event will be free, but tickets will be required. Tickets for this event are available at the Blair main office.*

## BLAIR PRESENTS

**A Very Special Evening with Soprano RENÉE FLEMING**

**Friday, April 10, 8 p.m., Ingram Hall**

*This concert is sponsored by the Mary Cortner Ragland Master Series Fund*

The undisputed reigning voice of the Metropolitan Opera makes a rare appearance in Nashville for a solo recital in the exquisite acoustical setting of Ingram Hall.

### The concert and reception are sold out

but Turner Hall will be available for live video viewing. The live video viewing is free, but tickets will be required. Tickets for the limited-seating live video viewing are available at the Blair main office. Contact Cindy Steine at 322-7651 for information.



# tutti

## STUDENTS

### PRECOLLEGE AND ADULTS

At the MTNA State Competition in November, the following Blair students received awards: **Annie Bender**, grade 9, winner of the junior strings competition and student of **Carolyn Huebl**; **Marie-Mitsou Akimoto**, grade 7, alternate in the junior strings competition and student of **Chris Teal**; and **Jacob Schafer**, grade 10, alternate in the senior strings competition and student of **Chris Teal**. Bender represented Blair and the state of

Tennessee in January at the Southern Division Competition in Virginia.

The **Blair Suzuki Players** performed at the Nashville Symphony Free Day of Music in October. **Carol Smith**, violin, and **Kirsten Cassel**, cello, directed the groups, accompanied by **Celeste Halbbrook Tuten**.

Students from the studio of **Celeste Halbbrook Tuten** presented a short program at St. George's Day Kindergarten in April.

In May, the **Youth Strings Orchestras**, the **Suzuki Reading Orchestra** and the **Beginning Reading Orchestra** combined for their spring concert in Ingram Hall. All are under the direction of **Celeste Halbbrook Tuten**.

**Will Bender** was selected to perform at the International Suzuki Conference in Minneapolis for concert artist **Helen Callus** in May. He and **Carey Skinner** performed in master classes at the second annual Viola Celebration in Knoxville in September. Both Will and Carey also attended Credo in Oberlin, Ohio, during the summer and are students of **Kathryn Plummer**.

**Daniel Capparella** won the Nashville Area Music Teachers' Association Young Artist Achievement Award in April. He is a violin student of **Carol Smith**.

**Christina Chintanaphol**, violin; **Susanna Johnson**, viola; **Jasmine Miller**, violin; **Wesley Skinner**, cello; **Rebekah Wallen**, harp; and **Robert Yang**, cello, performed as soloists at the Nashville Symphony Free Day of Music in October.

**Cameron Howe**, viola, performed as a soloist for the Metro Arts Exposition and Showcase in October.

Last October, **Kang Huh** presented his Suzuki Book 4-6 cello recital. **Celeste Halbbrook Tuten** was the accompanist. He is a current student of **Kirsten Cassel** and a former student of **Anne Hall Williams**.

**Susanna Johnson** attended the Eastern Music Festival in Greensboro, N.C. She is a viola student of **Kathryn Plummer**.

Blair's first annual Precollege Piano Competition took place Nov. 16. Organized and led by **Jama Reagan**, **Elizabeth Eckert** and the rest of the Blair piano faculty, it included guest lecturer **Melanie Lowe**, a member of Blair's musicology faculty.

Grades K & 1: **Gitae Park**, winner

Grades 2 & 3: **Dong Zhao**, winner; **Christine Li** and **Kaitlyn Mi**, honorable mention;

Grades 4 & 5: **Tony Ding**, winner, **Lindsey Tucker**, honorable mention;

Grades 6 & 7: **Jenny Sai** and **Joyce Kang**, winners

The winners studied with precollege piano faculty **Elizabeth Eckert**, **Chi Hee Hwang**, **Valerie Middleton** and **Roland Schneller**



Judge Helen Gleason with Grades K-3 winners of Blair's first Precollege Piano Competition. From left, Christine Li, Kaitlyn Mi, Dong Zhao and Gitae Park.

**Wesley Skinner** was one of three student cellists chosen to play in a master class with Yo-Yo Ma sponsored by the Nashville Symphony at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center. Wesley, a high school senior from Paducah, Ky., is a student of **Bradley Mansell** and a Myra Jackson Blair Scholarship recipient.

competition and a student of **Chris Teal**; and **Jacob Sievers**, junior, winner of the Young Artist Piano competition and a student of **Karen Ann Krieger**. All three represented Vanderbilt and the state of Tennessee in January at the Southern Division Competition in Virginia. Sievers was also selected to perform a solo concert last June at the 2008 Southern



Blair faculty member Mat Britain worked with students at the Taipai International Percussion Summer Camp last July.

**Lindsey Tucker**, **Jennifer Tucker** and **Janie Keenan** studied at the University of Memphis Summer Suzuki Institute. All are piano students of **Elizabeth Eckert**.

**Connor Webber**, cello student of **Anne Hall Williams**, presented his Suzuki Book 5-6 recital in June. **Celeste Halbrook Tuten** was the accompanist.

**Cecilia Yezbak** and **Claire Yezbak** studied at the Summer Suzuki Institute at Kingston in Ontario, Canada. They are piano students of **Elizabeth Eckert**.

#### UNDERGRADUATE

At the state MTNA competition in November, the following students received awards: **Madeleine (Lucy) Turner**, freshman, winner of the Senior Strings competition and a student of **Connie Heard**; **Ben Hart**, junior, representative in the Young Artist Strings

Illinois Music Festival, where he served as the orchestral pianist.

To wrap up the fall semester, the **Vanderbilt Commodore Steel Bands**, under the direction of **Mat Britain**, performed a special concert at the Vanderbilt Children's Hospital in December, which was broadcast on the hospital's closed-circuit TV system.

Senior voice major **Tierney Bamrick** participated in this summer's 40th annual American Institute of Musical Studies "AIMS in Graz" program in Graz, Austria. While there she studied German *lieder* with Blair's **Jonathan Retzlaff**, who, with **Charlene Harb** and Staff Accompanist **Jennifer McGuire**, held a position on the AIMS summer faculty. Blair seniors **Jena Carpenter** and **Amanda Pogach** also attended. Bamrick is a student of **Gayle Shay**.

Sophomore violin performance major **Kelsey Hudson** performed at Greenwood Chamber Music Camp in Massachusetts last summer and served as a counselor to high school students. She is a student of **Connie Heard**.

Blair sophomore **James Larson** won the senior division of the state competition for American String Teachers Association and will compete in the regional competition. He is a viola student of **Kathryn Plummer**.

Sophomore violinist **Gentry Lasater** was invited to present a violin recital in New Bern, N.C., in November and also is to perform the Tchaikovsky Concerto with the North Carolina Symphony in May. The appearance with the North Carolina Symphony was the result of winning the Young Artists' Concerto Competition. Gentry is a student of **Connie Heard**.

Blair sophomore **Chris Lowry** attended the Eastern Music Festival in Greensboro, N.C. He is a viola student of **Kathryn Plummer**.

**Emily Nelson**, junior cello performance major, was one of three student cellists chosen to play in a master class given by Yo-Yo Ma at Schermerhorn Hall. Nelson is a student of **Felix Wang**.

Blair senior **Roberto Papi** performed in master classes at the second annual Viola Celebration in Knoxville in September. He is a viola student of **Kathryn Plummer**.

**Johna Smith**, junior violin performance major, was a scholarship student at the Aspen Festival last summer, where she performed with the Sinfonia Orchestra and also with a piano quintet coached by Antoinette Perry. She is a student of **Connie Heard**.

**Austin Stevens**, sophomore violin performance major, returned last summer to the Masterworks orchestral program in Indiana, where he studied with Bruce

Wilkison. He is a student of **Connie Heard**.

**Eva Walsh**, junior violinist, returned on full scholarship last summer to the Colorado College Summer Music Festival in Colorado Springs. She is a student of **Connie Heard**.

## A L U M N I

#### PRECOLLEGE

**Kathryn Eberle** attended the Aspen Music Festival on fellowship last summer, performing in the Aspen Chamber Symphony and on a number of faculty chamber music concerts. A master's student at Juilliard, she was concertmaster of the Juilliard Orchestra for its recent tour of China and will perform as soloist with the Louisville Orchestra in April. She was a student of **Connie Heard**.

**Christopher Kim**, former concertmaster of the Curb Youth Symphony directed by **Carol Nies**, is attending Northwestern University, where he was accepted by renowned violinist and pedagogue Almita Vamos. He joins fellow precollege alum **Sam Moon**, a sophomore student of Vamos.

#### UNDERGRADUATE

**Sophia Arriaga**, BMus'08, is a scholarship student in the master's program at Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, studying with Gabriel Pegis. She is a former student of **Connie Heard**.

**Andrew Braddock**, BMus'08, is attending Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music; **Henry Haffner**, BMus'06, is attending Cincinnati Conservatory of Music; and **John Concklin**, BMus'06, graduated from the Yale School of Music in conducting. All are former viola students of **Kathryn Plummer**.

**Lisa Bryington**, BMus'06, is executive director of Boston Musica Viva ([www.bmv.org](http://www.bmv.org)), now celebrating its 40th sea-

son. She is a former flute student of **Jane Kirchner** and recently married Miles Clark Barr, an '06 engineering alumnus. Jane and Frank Kirchner attended the wedding.

**Jennifer Estrin**, BMus'08, attended the Aspen Music Festival last summer, studying with **Connie Heard** (her teacher at Blair) and Paul Kantor of the Cleveland Institute. She also performed a chamber music concert for the festival in Salida, Colo., as well as weekly with the Aspen Festival Orchestra. She is currently enrolled in the master's program at Indiana University, where she studies with Kevork Mardirossian.

**Alexandra MacKay**, BMus'97, a member of the Nashville law firm Stites & Harbison, has joined the board of the Tennessee Justice Center.

**Ben May**, BMus'08, won the American Choral Directors Association's student composition contest for this year with a setting of "Absalon, Fili Mi" for men's chorus with countertenor solo. He is a former student of the composition department faculty.

**Preetha Narayanan**, BMus'06, attended the Aspen Music Festival last summer and performed with the Aspen Festival Orchestra after having concluded 18 months of study on a Fulbright Fellowship in India. Currently enrolled in a master's program at the Guildhall School in London, she is a former student of **Connie Heard**.



Vanderbilt Opera Theatre presented Kurt Weill's Street Scene in November.



Former and current Blair students (with Blair faculty member Cornelia Heard) attended the Aspen Music Festival last summer. On top of Aspen Mountain: Bonnie Brown, Andy Braddock, Shona Goldberg-Leopold, Johna Smith, Heard, Preetha Narayanan, Jennifer Estrin and Kathryn Eberle, Not pictured, but also attending Aspen were Blair viola alums Whitney Bullock and Eliza Thomason.





Blair students Mira Chang, Blake Johnson, Justin Goldsmith and Emily Nelson with Yo-Yo Ma (second from left) at the Schermerhorn Center last fall. Nelson and Blair precollegiate cellist Wesley Skinner participated in Ma's master class.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CONNIE HEARD

**Holland Phillips**, BMus'00, is completing her doctorate at University of Oregon where she won the concerto competition and was selected to travel to Odense, Denmark, to compete in the International Nielsen Violin Competition. She is a former student of **Connie Heard**.

**Georgia Stitt**, BMus'94, worked as the vocal coach on the NBC show *America's Got Talent*. She also performed concerts in New York, Los Angeles and London, and taught master classes at Bowling Green State University, Baldwin-Wallace Conservatory of Music and Cal State Fullerton. She was music director for a tribute to Stephen Schwartz at Los Angeles' Pantages Theater starring Jason Alexander. She is recording new demos, starting work on her second album, and beginning a project with playwright Jamie Pachino.

**Shannon Thomas**, BMus'04, who earned her master's degree at Yale University with Ani Kavafian, is currently enrolled in the D.M.A. program at Cleveland Institute as a student of Paul Kantor. She is a former student of **Connie Heard**.

**Ashley Walters**, BMus'05, participated in a festival run by Saariaho and Anssi

Kartunnen for six string players and six composers, which culminated in a concert at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. She also taught at an advanced arts festival in North Hollywood, and her string quartet will serve residencies at Princeton, Cornell, the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and Eastman. Her first D.M.A. recital was in late November at the University of California, San Diego. She is a former student of **Felix Wang**.

#### FACULTY

The **Blair String Quartet** traveled to Highlands, N.C., in August to perform an unusual concert at the Highlands/Cashiers Chamber Music Festival. The quartet shared the program with acoustic group Punch Brothers, featuring mandolinist Chris Thile (formerly of Nickel Creek) performing works by Beethoven and Ives. Blair violinist **Chris Teal** and Thile each played solo Bach on their respective instruments. The quartet collaborated with banjoist Noam Pikelney on the finale of a quintet written some time ago for the quartet by **Edgar Meyer** and **Bela Fleck**. The artistic director of the festival is Emory professor and Blair precollegiate alumnus **William Ransom**.

Other quartet concerts this fall

included return engagements to Music Mountain in Connecticut, Lee University in Cleveland, Tenn., University of Georgia in Athens and Southwestern Georgia University in Americus. The quartet also appeared at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., performing with former Blair faculty member **Ron Shinn** and presenting master classes.

The **Blakemore Trio's** busy fall schedule included a concert on the prestigious "Artist Series" in Tallahassee, Fla. The trio also performed at the University of North Florida and Western Kentucky University, as well as on chamber music series in Memphis and Huntsville.

**Mat Britain**, adjunct instructor of music, was invited to teach steel drums at the Taipei International Percussion Summer Camp at the National Taipei University School of the Arts in July. The camp, sponsored by the Ju Percussion Foundation, featured a concert presented by the students at the end of the camp. Britain was also percussionist for country music star Louise Mandrell's "Joy To The World" Christmas Dinner and Show at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center in December.

**Joy Calico**, associate professor of musicology, presented papers at the national meeting of the German Studies Association and at a symposium on German culture at Iowa State University in October. In November she gave invited colloquia in the musicology departments at the University of California, Berkeley, and at Stanford University.

**David Childs**, associate professor of choral studies, served as conductor/clinician for the Texas All-Region XX Honor Choir in Dallas, the Tennessee All-Mid-State Women's Choir, the Mississippi All-State SATB Honor Choir, and the Lake Charles SATB Honor Choir. He tutored and lectured at the International Summer School of Choral Conducting in Hamilton, New

Zealand, and saw world premieres of newly commissioned works in Eugene, Ore., and in Oklahoma City by the National SATB Honor Choir at the National American Choral Directors Association Conference. He published the article "Weep No More" in *GIA Music Series Teaching Music through Performance, Volume III*.

**Amy Dorfman**, associate professor of piano, teamed up with violinist Noah Bendix-Balgley in September to present a benefit recital for the Asheville Symphony at the Diana Wortham Theater.

**Elizabeth Eckert**, adjunct artist teacher of piano, performed in Washington, D.C.'s Hall of Nations at the Levine School of Music's gala event. She also attended the Music Mind Games Unit 2 Teacher Training Class in Kensington, Md., last summer.

**Connie Heard**, professor of violin, returned to the artist faculty of the Aspen Music Festival and School last summer where she taught, coached chamber music, and performed on the faculty chamber music series. She performed on German violinist Julia Fischer's recital, along with David Halen, concertmaster of the St. Louis Symphony; Alan Gilbert, violist and conductor of the New York Philharmonic; and Eric Kim, principal cellist of the Cincinnati Symphony.

**Carolyn Huebl**, assistant professor of violin, taught at the Intermountain Suzuki Institute in Utah in June and then spent the summer at the Brevard Music Center, where she served as principal second violin, taught a full class of collegiate and precollegiate students and performed chamber music. This fall she presented a recital at Blair with Dean **Mark Wait**. In October, she presented a master class at University of North Florida while on tour with the **Blakemore Trio**.

**Amy Jarman**, senior lecturer in voice, presented recitals of American music in Sofia, Bulgaria, as a part of the AmBul 2008 Festival of American and Bulgarian music, and in Bristol, England, as a featured performer on the Bristol Cathedral recital series. In addition, she gave lecture/recitals and taught master classes in American art song at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London and the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, England.

**John Johns**, associate professor of guitar, recently performed a solo recital for the Tennessee Guitar Festival at Middle Tennessee State University. In the fall he presented "John Johns and His Lady Friends, Part Deux," with "lady friends" **Carolyn Huebl**, violin, **Jane Kirchner**, flute, and **Kathryn Plummer**, viola, at First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, Tenn., for its Fall Chamber Music Series; on The Blair School Signature Series; and at Richland Place. In November, Johns gave six concerts with the Nashville Symphony Orchestra on the Young People's Concerts series, performing works by Vivaldi and Rodrigo at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center and at Austin Peay State University. He also performed solo recitals on "Live in Studio C" on WPLN-FM celebrating its

10th anniversary and at Park Manor. **Karen Ann Krieger**, associate professor of piano and piano pedagogy, gave a presentation, "Teaching Technique and Musicality," to the Southern Indiana Area Music Teachers in Evansville in October. She also judged the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music's Concerto Competition.

**Michael Kurek**, associate professor of composition, had his Concertino for Celesta and Orchestra performed in January by the Orchestra of the Theater Lüneburg near Hamburg, Germany. His Sonata for Viola and Piano was performed in January by the distinguished soloist Sylvia Ahramjian and pianist Carl Cranmer in Philadelphia. Concurrent with the Philadelphia performance, Kurek was guest composer at West Chester University.

**Virginia Lamothe**, adjunct professor of dance history and music history, recently published an article in the journal *Early Music* on dance and performance practice issues in Claudio Monteverdi's *Orfeo*.

**Joe Rea Phillips**, senior artist teacher of guitar, taught tai chi in The Commons last summer for six weeks as part of the Vanderbilt Summer Academy, a pro-



Members of the Blair Percussion Ensemble, led by Blair faculty member Michael Holland, performed with rocks as instruments for one of the works in their November concert in Turner Hall.

JOHN HANSEN

gram that attracts gifted and talented middle and high school students from many states.

**Kathryn Plummer**, professor of viola, taught at the Viola Workout Camp in Crested Butte, Colo., in June. Also in June, she and **Michael Alec Rose** presented a lecture/recital at the International Viola Congress in Tempe, Ariz. She performed at the Festival der Zukunft in Ernen, Switzerland, in August and performed and taught at the Second Annual Viola Celebration in Knoxville in September. She was recently elected to serve on the National Board of the American Viola Society.

**Jonathan Retzlaff**, associate professor of voice, taught on the faculty of AIMS Festival in Graz, Austria, in July and August. He appeared with the AIMS Festival Orchestra singing selections from Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music* at the Schlossenberg in Graz and in Weiz, Austria. Last April Retzlaff was soloist in Johannes Brahms' Requiem with conductor Jamie Kirsch and the Blair choirs in a benefit concert for The Shade Tree Family Clinic in Nashville and the Lawala Community Clinic in Kenya.

**Melissa Rose**, associate professor of piano, gave a workshop on "Playing Orchestral Reductions: A Guide for the Perplexed Pianist" for the state convention of the Tennessee Music Teachers Association. In June, she was also the pianist for the Sherrill Milnes and Dawn Upshaw master classes at the national conference of the National Association of Teachers of Singing. In July, she served as an official pianist for ClarinetFest 2008, the annual conference of the International Clarinet Association, performing seven recitals with professional clarinetists from the world's leading orchestras and universities. Following the conference in Kansas City, she remained for her 15th season as pianist for the Summerfest Chamber Music Series. In October she performed with Nashville's Alias Chamber Ensemble.

**Michael Alec Rose**, associate professor of composition, was guest speaker for the music library's "faculty tune-up" series in November, speaking on the sources and collaborative process leading to his Pastoral Concerto for Violin and Orchestra. This composition is dedicated to Peter Sheppard Skaerved, who served as violin soloist for the premiere of the work with the Vanderbilt Orchestra in November.

**Helena Simonett**, assistant professor of Latin American studies and adjunct assistant professor of music history and literature, presented papers on her current research on indigenous ceremonial music at the Annual Conference on Rituals, Holidays, Festivals at Bowling Green State University and at the Society for Ethnomusicology Conference at Wesleyan University. Her essay "Quest for the Local: Building Musical Ties between Mexico and the United States" was published in *Postnational Musical Identities: Cultural Production, Distribution and Consumption in a Globalized Scenario*.

She is currently editing a book on accordion traditions in the Americas.

**Carol Smith**, senior artist teacher of violin, was a clinician and teacher trainer at Suzuki Music, Columbus Summer Institute, held at Otterbein College in Westerville, Ohio, in June, and a clinician at Ithaca College Suzuki Institute, Ithaca, N.Y., in July.

**Celeste Halbrook Tuten**, artist teacher of Suzuki violin, served as accompanist for the Middle Tennessee Suzuki Association at its annual fall workshop at St. Cecilia Academy.

**Agnes Wan**, adjunct artist teacher of piano, gave a solo recital at the American Cathedral in Paris in December. In April, she will give a solo recital at the Sherwood Conservatory in Chicago to be broadcast live on WFMT (98.7 FM). She has solo recitals scheduled in Chattanooga and Oak Ridge, Tenn.; Lexington, Ky.; and Cincinnati, Ohio. Her book, *Physical and Mental Issues in Piano Performance: The Interrelationships*

*between Physical Tension, Performance Anxiety, and Memorization Strategies*, was recently published by VDM-Verlag. She served as adjudicator for the Blount County Keyboard Competition in November and will also adjudicate for the Knoxville Music Club's auditions in March.

**Felix Wang**, associate professor of cello, performed and taught in several places in addition to his duties in the **Blair String Quartet** and **Blakemore Trio**. He had solo appearances in East Lansing, Mich., and at Christ Church Cathedral in Nashville and gave a master class at Florida State University. He spent the summer on the faculty of the Brevard Music Center, where he taught, performed chamber music, and played in the festival orchestra.

#### STAFF

The Blair School has reassigned two staff members at the Anne Potter Wilson Music Library. **Michael Jones** is circulation coordinator and responsible for all circulation services including course reserves. **Sara Manus** is now education and outreach librarian. In March, **Jacob Schaub** joined these colleagues as the new cataloguer at the Wilson Music Library. Schaub received his Master's in Library and Information Science in August 2008 from Kent State University and is currently working on his master's degree in music from Ohio University, which he hopes to complete in May of this year. Most recently, he catalogued sound recordings and music scores at Kent State University Libraries and Media Services.

**Adam Michael** has joined the Blair Development Office as assistant director. Most recently, Adam was associate director of the Homework Hotline. Prior to that, he served as a public defender in the 18<sup>th</sup> Judicial District and as a teacher of American history at Montgomery Bell Academy in Nashville. He is a 2000 graduate of Duke University and a 2004 graduate of Vanderbilt Law School.



Members of the trombone section of the Blair Big Band as the group played with the Nashville Jazz Orchestra in December.



Blair alumni and current students gather for dinner to discuss "What's Next?," a career networking event at the beginning of Reunion Weekend.

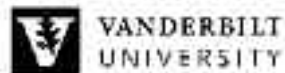
## Make your gift to **BLAIR** with a **TAX-FREE IRA rollover**

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- The distributed amount is excluded from income so no charitable deduction can be claimed.

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## Mandolin professor Butch Baldassari dies

**B**utch Baldassari, a Blair School of Music professor who created a cottage industry around his love of mandolin music, died January 10 at a Nashville hospice. He was 56.

"Butch Baldassari was a wonderful artist, a warm and generous teacher and a great colleague and friend," said Mark Wait, dean of the Blair School. "We were extremely fortunate to enjoy his affiliation with the Blair School and to learn from this remarkable man."

"Butch's passing is a huge loss to the Blair School, to Vanderbilt and to the musical community."

Baldassari was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor nearly two years ago. In 2007, some of his friends including musicians Ricky Skaggs, Bela Fleck, Mark O'Connor and Dierks Bentley participated in a benefit concert at Blair to help defray his medical expenses.

A native of Scranton, Pa., Baldassari worked in Las Vegas as a craps table croupier before turning to music full time. He moved to Nashville in 1989 to record with the band Weary Hearts. His mandolin work is featured on recordings by Alison Krauss, Elek Bacsik, David Schnauffer, Nashville Bluegrass Band and others. In addition to Weary Hearts, Baldassari was a member of the bands Lonesome Standard Time, The Grass is

Greener, and he was founder and leader of the Nashville Mandolin Ensemble.

Baldassari founded the Nashville Mandolin Ensemble after learning about mandolin orchestras popular in America at the turn of the century. The ensemble, consisting of mandolins, mandola, mandocello, guitar and bass, was a popular group in Nashville.

"We surprise our audiences every time we play," Baldassari said. "Our repertoire includes Bill Monroe's bluegrass as well as the music of O'Carolan and Vivaldi."

Baldassari recorded dozens of albums sold through his own company, Sound Art Recordings (<http://www.soundartrecordings.com/index.shtml>). They include collections of Christmas, jazz, bluegrass and classical music. He frequently explored the frontiers and relationships between different varieties of music. For example, his album *Travelers* mixed traditional Irish, American and Latin dance music with an instrumental lineup of two mandolins, bouzouki and guitar.

Baldassari was adjunct professor of mandolin at Blair since 1996. Survivors include his wife, Sinclair Baldassari, and son, Blake Baldassari.



Baldassari

NEEL BOWEN